

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kelly Ruesta, and I am a resident of Vernon/student at University of Connecticut. I am undocumented youth member part of CT Students for a Dream.

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

I was born in Lima, Peru and moved to the United States when I was turning eight years old. I'm currently a sophomore at University of Connecticut and work at the Puerto Rican/ Latin American Culture Center and am an intern for the Office for Diversity and Inclusion. As a child, I never truly understood the notion behind being an undocumented immigrant. All I knew was that my father was not getting the healthcare he needed. He is diabetic which means he has more doctor visits, blood work and medications. However, I watched and saw how my father was unable to take recommendations provided by the doctors. Rather he would take vitamins or home remedies when his body aches or when he had a head attack. I never truly realized the need behind health care until I entered highschool. I played volleyball, and as a defense player I fell down a lot. It was not uncommon for me to not get bruises. I never complain because at that point I realize the notion behind us not having insurance and being undocumented. If I hurt, I would not be able to get into an ambulance and feel fine. We did not have that type of money to prioritize our health. We had developed a mentality of if it is not broken then ignore. This took a toll on me as I saw how my father's body began to deteriorate not only from being diabetic but due to his hard labor work. I'm worried to see my father's breaking point, when his body can no longer catch up to his mind. He is a strong man but physically his body is fighting against itself. Nothing can prevent the effects diabetes has on a body but it can be managed through the medications and daily check ups that are inaccessible to my father.

I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

*Kelly Ruesta*